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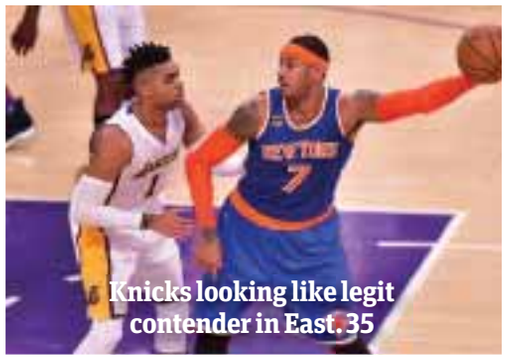

Knicks looking like legit contender in East. 35

GOT THE SUNDAY SCARIES?

How to prepare before they strike again. 34

Grown-up talk with the creator of 'Saved By the Bell.' 28

SHOULD YOU FAKE IT?

Some say artificial Christmas trees are more environmentally friendly than real trees. Others disagree. 2

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1. What did a group of city residents do to try to keep SantaCon partiers out of their neighborhoods?

2. What is the Knicks' record in games decided by four points or fewer?

3. What is the name of the producer behind the hit show "Saved By the Bell"?

3 things you need to know

MCCONNELL WON'T GIVE TIMELINE FOR OBAMACARE REPLACEMENT

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Monday the Senate will move to repeal President Barack Obama's healthcare law shortly after Jan. 1, but declined to give a timeline for a plan to replace it. McConnell said the Senate would vote as soon as it returns from its year-end recess to repeal Obamacare. "And then we will work expeditiously to come up with a better program than current law, because current law is simply unacceptable and not sustainable," he said. Asked repeatedly, McConnell did not give any timeline for when the Republicans would offer their own plan. He said they would be consulting with different "stakeholders."

REUTERS

CALIF. MAN ACCUSED OF HATE CRIME IN STABBING NEAR MOSQUE

2 A man has been arrested on suspicion of committing an anti-Muslim hate crime and another was being sought by authorities in connection with the weekend stabbing of a worshiper near a Southern California mosque, police said on Monday. Coming amid a surge in harassment and intimidation of Muslims reported by the FBI, the incident occurred late Saturday night outside the Masjid Al-Rasool mosque in the town of Simi Valley, about 40 miles northwest of Los Angeles, according to police Commander Robert Brill. The confrontation began as a verbal altercation that escalated into a physical fight between the two suspects and the victim, who had attended prayer services at the mosque that evening, and a number of his friends, Brill said. REUTERS

WHATSAPP, SKYPE SET TO COME UNDER NEW EU SECURITY RULES

3 Messaging services such as Microsoft's Skype and Facebook's WhatsApp face stricter rules on how they handle customer data under new security laws due to be proposed by the European Union, according to a draft document seen by Reuters. The EU executive wants to extend some rules that now only apply to telecom operators to web companies offering calls and messages using the internet, known as "Over-The-Top" (OTT) services, according to the draft. Web services will have to guarantee the confidentiality of communications and obtain users' consent to process their location data, mirroring similar provisions included in a separate data protection law due to come into force in 2018.

REUTERS

CREATIVE COMMONS/STEVEN DEPOLO

Live trees are better for the environment, advocates say

The real vs. fake controversy comes down to costs.

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A small forest has sprung up on the sidewalk near Washington Market Park in Tribeca, one of Soho Trees' five city outposts selling Christmas trees from around the country.

A 6-foot grand fir, which a manager said is the most fragrant and is best suited for short-term use, runs about $160.

Noble firs that come from the temperate Oregon rainforest are handcut and shipped across the United States and are a little pricier.

Cheaper is the plastic tree, of course. A 6½-foot artificial tree now on sale at Target runs about $67.

Although a fresh-cut tree might run up the holiday expenses, there are a growing number of people who say it's worth it — not just for the aroma — but for the sake of the environment.

Advocates are adamant that real trees are more sustainable than artificial trees made of non-biodegradable petroleum-based materials that are shipped from far-off factories.

Tim O'Connor, executive director of the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), which advocates for the Christmas tree industry, told Metro that there's a multitude of reasons why live trees are greener than the plastic ones "from China."

"Christmas trees are a crop," he said. "No different than corn. Every time one is harvested, another one is planted. Sometimes more than one. During the eight, 10, 12 years that it's growing, it's providing oxygen, a habitat for wildlife.

"They employ local people, local farmers, and create a business cycle in their local communities. The trees are recycled. They go right back to the earth, as chips, as compost."

As for fire safety issues, O'Connor said claims that real trees catch fire more easily than artificial ones aren't true.

"A lot of that has been erroneously reported," O'Connor said. "Trees don't spontaneously combust. Yeah, you have to water a live tree. But a plastic tree fire would be quite a spectacular fire."

Nevertheless, most Americans still opt for the economical plastic trees that can be reused year after year.

According to a Nielsen survey conducted on behalf of the American Christmas Tree Association (ACTA), 81 percent of households (about 100 million households) will display artificial trees as opposed to fresh cut ones.

An analysis from the organization concluded that neither real nor fake trees have a measurable impact on the environment, said Jami Warner, executive director of ACTA.

Warner said that the ACTA recommends families buy the type of tree that fits their lifestyle best, noting both can have advantages.

"An artificial tree can be reused year after year and is very easy to display and take down at season's end. A real tree has that unmistakable Christmas tree smell but must be watered daily, which is an absolute must, and can be messy," he said. "Both types of trees can be recycled, although there are more programs available for recycling real trees."

O'Connor bristled at the idea that fake Christmas trees are comparable to real trees.

"The American Christmas Tree Association is the association for the fake tree industry," he said. "They of course have concocted a study that says 'more people like our product than the real thing.' I don't buy that."

Painful Varicose Veins & Swollen Legs?

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City to start selling public parking spaces to car-sharing companies

A pilot program will appropriate 600 parking spots.

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GETTY IMAGES

The city will roll out a pilot program in the spring that allows car-sharing companies such as ZipCar and Car2Go to rent out scarce public parking spaces and even metered spaces.

A shared goal of many city agencies is to minimize the number of cars in the city — on account of environmental factors, space, and traffic, among other reasons. The City Council Committee on Transportation heard testimony from the commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation Polly Trottenberg, as well as representatives from some car sharing companies Monday that made the case that carsharing services can dramatically reduce the number of cars kept in the city.

The idea is to have a mini-fleet of cars available to more people in more locations around the city, even in the outer boroughs where parking garages and lots are fewer and farther away. For instance, several Enterprise cars could be parked around the corner from your apartment.

The proposal is based on a study conducted across five cities (Washington, San Diego, Seattle, and Vancouver and Calgary, Canada) showing that an average of nine cars were taken off the road for every ride-sharable car brought to a fleet. In Calgary, 11 cars were taken off the streets for each shared car.

Although the term "ride-sharing" has several meanings in the age of Uber and Lyft, the program at hand refers to the car rental services that allow members to pay a yearly membership fee, and then using a smartphone app or an access card, drive a car without a key for an hourly or daily rate.

Zipcar's current promotion in New York and New Jersey for a basic monthly driving plan is $7 a month, a $25 one-time application fee and rates from $9.25 an hour and $89 a day.

The program would consider using some "underused" parking spaces designated for some subsidized residents in NYCHA housing, senior housing and at hospitals. The pilot will designate 300 spaces in public parking facilities, and another 300 on-street spaces.

City Councilman Mark Levine, who helped author the proposal, explained that the people who keep cars in the city for occasional use would be financially and logistically better off getting a car-sharing membership.

"There are 1.5 million private cars in the city and millions more that come in every single day, and there is simply not enough space to put all of them. The only way is to find alternatives to private ownership. The companies' research says that as many as 50 people share a single car. So technically, the program would free up parking space."

The pilot program would experiment with different business models, Levine said.

And the city wouldn't have to pay a dime, he said. Instead, the program would likely raise significant revenue for the city, a secondary advantage to the initiative.

BRIEF

FDNY completes $47M renovations in pursuit of bathroom equality

In a $47 million step toward diversity in the firehouse, FDNY announced on Monday that renovations to all the city's firehouses are complete and those who identify as women have a separate bathroom and changing area.

The department has 67 firefighters, including nine women of 330 probationary firefighters who were recently sworn in — the second largest group of women to enter the training academy in FDNY history.

"The city's commitment to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and afforded the same opportunities has now achieved another milestone — the ability for all women firefighters to work in any firehouse throughout the city and have access to appropriate bathroom and changing facilities," said Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro.

The project took 14 years to complete, Nigro said, but now all 214 of the city's active firehouses have been renovated.

The price sounds steep, but according to an FDNY spokesman, the money didn't go to golden toilets. Changes to hallways and plumbing had to be made as well as — in some cases — asbestos abatement, so $47 million covers the cost of renovating the final 47 firehouses during the past two years.

From 2002 to 2011, more than $30 million was spent to install facilities for those who identify as women in 54 firehouses — projects that were deemed the easiest and least expensive to complete, according to the FDNY.

Two firehouses are vacant and "undergoing major gut rehabs" and a third firehouse will get the full treatment with new facilities installed in the spring, the FDNY said.

KIMBERLY M. AQUILINA

Head of New York City's embattled children's services agency resigns

Commissioner for the Administration of Children's Services Gladys Carrión is stepping down following a series of high-profile child abuse cases.

Carrión submitted her resignation to Mayor Bill de Blasio, who has defended Carrion in the past despite ordering investigations of the agency. She served three years as commissioner.

"I have struggled with this decision but have come to the conclusion that it is best for my well-being," Carrión wrote, according to ABC7. "After 40 years of working on behalf of children and families, it is time for me to retire."

Carrión testified before the New York City Council in October and cried as she talked about 6-year-old Zymere Perkins, who was beaten to death with a broom.

Commissioner for the Administration of Children's Services Gladys Carrión in April @ NYCCHILDREN/FACEBOOK

"I have committed my entire career to helping children and families," Carrión said, the New York Post reported at the time. "Losing a child is unbearable, and it's my responsibility, and one that I take seriously."

"These are our children, these are my children," she added.

De Blasio said he accepted Carrión's resignation and said her four decades of public service were marked with "excellence and an unparalleled commitment to the children and families of New York."

The city is looking for a "passionate reformer" to continue Carrión's work, de Blasio continued, but while Comptroller Scott Stringer recognized Carrion's passion, he called for a clear plan for reform.

KIMBERLY M. AQUILINA

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NYPD officers secure the crime scene of the shootings in Mount Hope. EDWIN SOTO

Violent Sunday in NYC leaves 3 dead, 8 hurt in separate incidents

All but one of the crimes involved a gun, police said.

ALEXI FRIEDMAN
@MetroNewYork
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Three people were killed and eight others wounded in separate violent incidents Sunday in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens, the NYPD and news outlets reported. All but one of the attacks involved a gun.

In the Bronx, a gunman opened fire on two people in the Mount Hope section at about 7 p.m., killing a 41-year-old man, who was shot in the head, the NYPD said. Authorities on Monday identified him as Jose Morales.

A 25-year-old man was shot twice in the face and once in the midsection during that incident, police said. He was taken to St. Barnabas Hospital and was listed in critical condition. The shooting happened on East 175th Street and Weeks Avenue, near Morales' home. The violence began with an argument, the New York Daily News reported.

In South Ozone Park, Queens, 21-year-old Eric Assanah Jr. was found dead with a gunshot wound to his midsection in his home at 135 Place, at around 12:20 p.m., police said. On Monday, 21-year-old Jonathan Chan was charged with second-degree murder, burglary and resisting arrest, the NYPD said. Chan turned himself in to police, DNA Info reported. Authorities told the news site that Chan was among four men who stormed into the home and opened fire, allegedly over drugs.

In Williamsburg, Delvin Martinez, 31, was stabbed in the midsection and neck, and died of his injuries at Woodhull Hospital, police reported. A 29-year-old man with Martinez was stabbed in the midsection, neck and face and is in critical condition. Police officers discovered the two victims at 215 Heyward St., near Marcy Avenue, at about 12:20 a.m.

No arrests have been made in the three killings, police said.

At about 7:30 p.m., in Fordham Manor section of the Bronx, a 21-year-old woman was shot in the leg while waiting at a bus stop, the Daily News reported.

Four men were also shot in Brooklyn at about 6:20 p.m., on Knickerbocker Avenue near Jefferson Street in Bushwick.

And in Manhattan early Sunday, a 25-year-old man was shot in the abdomen outside the Hells Angels' biker gang headquarters in the East Village, according to the New York Post. The violence began around 1:20 a.m., when David Martinez, 25, tried to move a traffic cone so his friend could steer his car around a livery cab, the paper reported. A Hells Angels member told Martinez not to touch the cone, and the two began arguing. Martinez was taken to a hospital and his injuries were not considered life threatening, according to the report.

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BRIEF

Donate to Metro's Toy Drive

In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

This year marks the 7th anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor in chief. Mr. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Mr. Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It is our goal to keep that magic alive.

"Tony felt we should use the size and scale of Metro to help other's and he used enormous dedication and force to execute the project and every year make children in need a little happier during the holiday season," said Metro's Chief Executive Officer Yggers Mortensen.

"I am proud to continue this project in honor of Tony and I hope all our readers, suppliers and members of the Metro team will help to make this yet another great Metro Magic year."

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to Metro .us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic story on the homepage.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's secure payment system, and your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city.

This season, we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

It's good to receive a gift. It's better to give one. METRO

People board an Amtrak train at Penn Station. GETTY IMAGES

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NYC train tunnel project could tie up traffic for three years

Construction of the Gateway Project will not begin until at least 2019.

Traffic jams could afflict New York City's heavily traveled West Side Highway for three years as a multibillion-dollar train tunnel is built under the Hudson River, draft proposals obtained by Reuters show, feeding concern about an area already disrupted by massive real estate development.

The draft, obtained from a transportation sector source, reveals for the first time the actual work necessary to begin building the massive tunnel linking New York and New Jersey. It represents a marquee component of Amtrak's $24 billion Gateway Project to repair and expand the heart of the nation's critical and lucrative northeast transportation corridor.

The plan is expected to become part of the draft environmental impact statement to be released next summer. Experts told Reuters marine life in the Hudson could be threatened by the work zone that is expected to be the equivalent of four football fields. At its center point, rising up from the bottom of the riverbed, will be a concrete encasement built to protect the new tunnel.

The Gateway Project is considered critical to the greater metropolitan New York City area, which produces 10 percent of the country's economic output, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Contractors may also have to bore through a historic century-old granite bulkhead along the river shoreline, the documents show. Reuters also reviewed public records and conducted interviews with transportation officials and industry sources.

Construction would not begin until at least 2019, according to public records.

"The disruptions could be horrible," the transportation sector source told Reuters.

Manhattan's far West Side also is grappling with disruptions from the massive 28-acre Hudson Yards mixed-use real estate development project that straddles the existing rail connections.

Amtrak's current century-old tunnel, a few blocks north of where the new one would enter Manhattan at 29th Street, was damaged by flooding during 2012's Superstorm Sandy, which left behind a corrosive residue. It would undergo repair and renovation once the new tunnel is operational.

> *"The disruptions could be horrible."*
> The Transportation Sector Source

The new tunnel could cost between $5 billion and $7 billion. REUTERS

For the expanded version, visit metro.us

Protests end Wonder Woman's fight for equality at United Nations

The scantily clad, curvaceous comic book superhero has had her appointment as a United Nations honorary ambassador cut in less than two months following protests.

Wonder Woman's battle for equality for women and girls at the United Nations has come to a untimely end.

A United Nations spokesman said the character's role at the 193-member state organization would end on Friday despite plans for Wonder Woman to be used in an empowerment campaign for women and girls into 2017.

The move came after the Oct. 21 appointment of the superhero to fight for gender equality sparked heavy criticism, with nearly 45,000 people signing an online petition asking U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to reconsider selection of the character.

"Although the original creators may have intended Wonder Woman to represent a strong and independent 'warrior' woman with a feminist message, the reality is that the character's current iteration is that of a large breasted, white woman of impossible proportions," the petition read.

Wonder Woman, a DC Comics Inc. heroine, first appeared in 1941, fighting villains, rescuing victims and unearthing evil plots.

Dozens of U.N. employees protested at the U.N. headquarters in New York City on the day of the appointment when Diane Nelson, president of DC Entertainment, said the Wonder Woman campaign would feature various initiatives "over the course of the next year."

The U.N. did not provide further details as to why the Wonder Woman campaign was ending this week but spokesman Jeffrey Brez said campaigns using fictional characters often lasted no longer than a few months.

He said "Angry Birds," a collection of animated characters that originated in an online video game, were used as climate envoys in March for a single day.

DC Entertainment, which publishes DC Comics, said it was pleased with the exposure Wonder Woman brought to the U.N.'s global goals to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls by 2030.

"Wonder Woman stands for peace, justice and equality, and for 75 years she has been a motivating force for many and will continue to be long after the conclusion of her U.N. Honorary Ambassadorship," said Courtney Simmons, from DC Entertainment,

DC Entertainment is a subsidiary of Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. that is a division of Time Warner.

Simmons said the release next year of a special-edition Wonder Woman comic book on the empowerment of women and girls, announced in October, is still planned.

A full-length Wonder Woman movie, unaffiliated with the U.N. campaign, starring Israeli actress Gal Gadot is scheduled for release by Warner Bros. in June next year. REUTERS

"Wonder Woman stands for peace, justice and equality."

Simmons

Actors Lynda Carter and Gal Gadot attend the Wonder Woman U.N. Ambassador Ceremony at United Nations on Oct. 21, in New York City. GETTY IMAGES

BRIEF

SWIFT confirms new cyber thefts, hacking tactics

Cyber attacks targeting the global bank transfer system have succeeded in stealing funds since February's heist of $81 million from the Bangladesh central bank as hackers have become more sophisticated in their tactics, according to a SWIFT official and a previously undisclosed letter the organization sent to banks worldwide.

The messaging network in a Nov. 2 letter seen by Reuters warned banks of the escalating threat to their systems, according to the SWIFT letter. The attacks and new hacking tactics underscore the continuing vulnerability of the SWIFT messaging network, which handles trillions of dollars in fund transfers daily.

"The threat is very persistent, adaptive and sophisticated — and it is here to stay," SWIFT said in the November letter to client banks, seen by Reuters.

The disclosures provide fresh evidence that SWIFT remains at risk of attacks nearly a year after funds were stolen from a Bangladesh Bank account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The unprecedented cyber theft prompted regulators around the globe to tighten bank security requirements, amidst a global investigation by the FBI, Bangladesh authorities and Interpol.

Banks using the SWIFT network, which include both central banks and commercial banks, have been hit with a "meaningful" number of attacks - about a fifth of them resulting in stolen funds, since the Bangladesh heist, Stephen Gilderdale, head of SWIFT's Customer Security Programme, told Reuters. REUTERS

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Senate Republican leader backs investigation into Russian hacking

Trump and his staff have repeatedly dismissed the reports as "ridiculous," blaming them on Democrats unhappy that Trump won.

Russian President Vladimir Putin GETTY IMAGES

"Any foreign breach of our cybersecurity measures is disturbing, and I strongly condemn any such efforts," McConnell said. "This simply cannot be a partisan issue." McConnell

The Senate's top Republican broke with President-elect Donald Trump on Monday over whether Russian hacking during the U.S. election merited closer scrutiny, a fissure between Trump and his party that appeared to grow as lawmakers pressed for a special investigation into the matter.

The divide raised the possibility of enduring clashes between Trump and Republicans during his presidency over how to handle Russian President Vladimir Putin, a leader long viewed by many in the party as a calculating, untrustworthy foe but whom Trump has repeatedly praised for his leadership.

"The Russians are not our friends," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told a news conference.

Calls on Sunday by two leading Republican foreign policy voices, Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham, to investigate Russia's hacking were buoyed on Monday by McConnell, who said Russia's involvement needed further investigation.

"McConnell said it "defies belief" that Republicans would be reluctant to investigate Russian actions.

McConnell's remarks contrasted with those of Trump and his staff, who scoffed at reports that the CIA had concluded the hacks and leaks of Democratic emails were carried out with the goal of helping Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton. Trump said the conclusion was "ridiculous."

Some lawmakers have called for a special committee to investigate the hacking, but McConnell did not back that idea, saying he has confidence in the Senate Intelligence and Armed Services committees. Cory Gardner, a Republican, said the Russian hacking reflected the need for a permanent committee dedicated to cybersecurity.

It was not clear how the House of Representatives would respond to the hacking and calls for investigations. House committees have not announced plans for hearings, and Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan issued a statement criticizing Russia but blasting what he termed "exploiting the work of our intelligence committee for partisan purposes."

Though congressional Republicans support a probe of Russia's involvement in the election, they have shied away from agreeing with the CIA's assessment that the hacks were deliberately carried out to undermine Clinton.

"It's obvious that the Russians hacked into our campaigns," McCain said Monday in an interview with Reuters. "But there is no information that they were intending to affect the outcome of the election, and that's why we need a congressional investigation."

Separately on Monday, one Republican and nine Democratic electors led by the daughter of the House Democratic leader, Nancy Pelosi, wrote to James Clapper, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, requesting a briefing on the hacking reports before the Electoral College formally decides the election on Dec. 19.

John Podesta, chairman of Clinton's presidential campaign, said in a statement that the campaign supported the electors' letter, which raises "very grave issues involving our national security."

Clapper's office did not respond to a request for comment about the letter.

Charles Schumer, who will be the Senate Democratic leader next year, said he welcomed McConnell's support for "a deep and thorough bipartisan investigation" with access to all relevant intelligence. REUTERS

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Trump attack on Lockheed Martin foreshadows war on defense industry

The new administration's focus is likely to be "wide-reaching and impact all of government as we look to come up with better deals," Trump transition spokesman Jason Miller said.

Donald Trump on Monday widened his attack on defense contractors, slamming Lockheed Martin Corp's F-35 fighter jet program as too expensive as aides to the president-elect said he intends to keep pushing to cut the costs of military hardware.

Trump's latest Twitter broadside sent defense shares tumbling and fanned concerns that the incoming administration will reduce defense contractors' profit margins and cut broader federal spending, threatening U.S. factory jobs even as Trump promises to boost manufacturing employment.

"The F-35 program and cost is out of control," Trump said on Twitter, echoing campaign promises to cut waste in federal spending. "Billions of dollars can and will be saved on military [and other] purchases after Jan. 20."

Last week, Trump targeted Boeing Co. with tweets for "out of control" costs on new Air Force One planes, urging the federal government to "Cancel order!"

Trump's F-35 tweet drew support from U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, who has voiced support for the fighter jet in the past. While a president cannot cancel a program after funds have been allocated, it can purchase less.

President-elect Donald Trump GETTY IMAGES

"We're going to look for opportunities to go back through and make sure that we're not getting taken advantage of."

Trump

"He can reduce the buy over time, next year, as we look at it again," McCain told Reuters.

But Trump's off-the-cuff remarks bristled others in Congress. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat from Connecticut, home to F-35 engine maker Pratt & Whitney, said the program supports 2,000 Pratt jobs and thousands more at suppliers.

"The suggestion that costs are out of control is just plain wrong," he said. Trump should "learn more about the facts" before discussing "arbitrary cuts in the program," he added. "He's the president-elect. What he says matters."

Lockheed shares fell 2.5 percent after being down 5.4 percent earlier. Shares of General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, BAE and Raytheon also fell, while United Technologies and Boeing shares were slightly higher.

The F-35 has been dogged by problems, with the Pentagon's chief arms buyer once describing as "acquisition malpractice" the decision to produce jets before completing development.

That led to retrofits and helped escalate costs to an estimated $400 billion, prompting the F-35 to be described as the most expensive weapon system in history.

The Pentagon's chief weapons tester has continued to criticize it, but the jets are now in use by the U.S. Marine Corps and Air Force, and by six countries: Australia, Britain, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands and Israel. Japan took delivery of its first jet last week, according to a program spokesman.

Lockheed's F-35 program leader, Jeff Babione, said Monday the company had invested millions to reduce the jet's price by 60 percent from original estimates. "We project it to be about $85 million in the 2019 or 2020 time frame," he told reporters in Israel. REUTERS

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Trump taps Goldman Sachs executive Cohn for key economic post

Donald Trump on Monday said he would appoint Goldman Sachs Group Inc President and Chief Operating Officer Gary Cohn to head the White House National Economic Council, a group that coordinates economic policy across agencies.

"As my top economic adviser, Gary Cohn is going to put his talents as a highly successful businessman to work for the American people," Trump said in a statement.

Cohn will follow former senior Goldman executives Robert Rubin and Stephen Friedman, who ran the council in the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, respectively.

The council post, which helps to coordinate and develop the president's economic agenda, can also be seen as a stepping stone to other government jobs. Rubin led the council before becoming Treasury Secretary.

Gary Cohn GETTY IMAGES

Cohn, 56, is just one of a number of former Goldman executives who are slated to join the Trump administration and advise on the economy, including Treasury secretary nominee Steven Mnuchin and White House adviser Steve Bannon.

"We will miss Gary at Goldman Sachs, but I believe the American people and the President-Elect are fortunate that he has chosen to serve his country," Goldman Chief Executive Officer Lloyd Blankfein said in a statement.

Cohn had long been regarded as the likely successor to Blankfein, but that view has dimmed in the past several years as Blankfein, 62, showed no signs that he would step down in the near future. REUTERS

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Dylann Roof made lists of SC churches before attack

Roof faces a death sentence if found guilty of murder charges in state court. That trial is slated for next year.

Roof's lawyers have not disputed his guilt but hope to spare him from being executed on charges of hate crimes resulting in death, obstruction of religion and firearms violations. GETTY IMAGES

Investigators searching the car of South Carolina church shooting suspect Dylann Roof last year found handwritten lists of mostly black parishes around the state, including the one attacked, jurors at his death penalty trial learned on Monday.

Roof, an avowed white supremacist, has confessed he targeted the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston because he knew black people would be gathered there. Nine people died in the June 2015 shooting at a Bible study meeting.

The significance of the other churches to Roof, 22, was not explained at the federal trial in Charleston.

State crime scene investigator Brittany Burke testified that the lists included other African Methodist Episcopal churches, a predominantly black Baptist church and a black Roman Catholic church in Charleston.

Roof noted the addresses, phone numbers and hours for churches elsewhere in the state as well, Burke said.

Jurors also heard excepts from Roof's online manifesto, where he criticized minorities and Jews.

Two months before the shooting, Roof purchased a pistol and stockpiled ammunition, a South Carolina gun store manager testified.

Security video showed Roof shopping and filling out a background check form at Shooter's Choice in West Columbia on April 11, 2015.

He returned on April 16 to pick up the .45-caliber Glock, which he is accused of using in the shooting, and to buy five magazines, each capable of holding 13 rounds, store manager Ronnie Thrailkill testified. Roof returned on April 27 for additional magazines.

By law, Shooter's Choice was allowed to sell the gun to Roof after three days if a background check had not come back.

On June 29, 2015, 12 days after the massacre, the store received notification of Roof being ineligible to buy the weapon, Thrailkill said.

Roof told police after an arrest at a mall in February 2015 that he used narcotics, an admission that should have led to the gun sale being blocked, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey has said.

"How many times do you receive a denial of the sale of a gun after the gun has been used in a crime?" Assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Richardson asked on Monday.

"Never," Thrailkill said. REUTERS

BRIEF

Supreme Court rejects AIG ex-CEO Hank Greenberg's appeal

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected former American International Group CEO Maurice "Hank" Greenberg's bid to escape civil fraud charges in New York accusing him of orchestrating sham transactions at the insurer.

The justices left in place a June ruling by the New York Court of Appeals that his trial on charges brought by the New York Attorney General's Office could proceed. The non-jury trial of Greenberg, 91, started in September. He has already testified in his own defense.

But the parties agreed at the end of November to put the trial on hold until January while they enter into mediation aimed at resolving the case.

Greenberg's lawyers declined to comment on the Supreme Court action. A spokesman for New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman had no immediate comment.

Greenberg led the New York-based insurance giant for four decades before he was ousted in 2005. The following year, AIG (AIG.N) paid $1.64 billion to settle federal and state probes into its business practices.

He has asserted that the case should have been over in 2013 when a $115 million settlement with AIG shareholders over improper accounting received court approval. New York was forced to drop its damages claims because of that decision.

Justice Charles Ramos of New York state court in Manhattan is presiding over Greenberg's trial, and in September began directly questioning Greenberg. REUTERS

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Netanyahu says Israel 'mightier' as first F-35 fighter jets arrive

The squadron is expected to be the first operational outside the United States. The planes are the first of 50, costing around $100 million each.

Israel on Monday became the first country after the United States to receive the U.S.-built F-35 stealth jet which will increase its ability to attack distant targets, including Iran.

The much-hyped arrival of the first two fighter jets was overshadowed by President-elect Donald Trump's tweet that Lockheed Martin's whole F-35 project was too expensive, and the delivery was delayed for hours by bad weather preventing their take-off from Italy.

"Our long arm has now become longer and mightier," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Nevatim air base in the southern Negev desert.

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter, also attending the ceremony which was delayed until after dark, said the planes were critical to maintaining Israel's military edge in the region.

A U.S. squadron of the planes, which have suffered delays and cost overruns, became operational in August. The F-35 program is the Pentagon's largest weapons project.

"The F-35 program and cost is out of control," Trump said on Twitter, sending Lockheed Martin's shares down 4 percent.

Jeff Babione, Lockheed Martin's F-35 program leader, said the company understood concerns about affordability and had invested millions of dollars to try to reduce its price.

Israel, which finalised a 10-year, $38 billion arms deal from the United States this year, plans to maintain two F-35 squadrons.

Critics of the plane say it can carry a smaller weapons payload and has a shorter range than Israel's current squadrons of U.S.-built F-15s and F-16s.

But some experts say the F-35's stealth capabilities make up for this because it can be more accurate and fly a more direct route to its target. Israel's air force mostly flies missions close to home, in the Gaza Strip and against arms shipments to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,left, look at one of the first two F-35 stealth fighter jets purchased in the United States next to its pilot, an Israeli officer, after he landed on Dec. 12, 2016, at the Israeli Nevatim Air Force Base in the Negev desert, near the southern city of Beersheva. GETTY IMAGES

It is also believed to have carried out bombings in Sudan against arms shipments to Palestinian militants, and to have drawn up contingency plans against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Israel initially ordered 33 of the fighters but signed off on another 17 last month.

Nimrod Shefer, a retired Israeli air force major-general, said the new aircraft were a welcome addition.

"[There are] very low- to very high-altitude missiles ... and targets that are becoming more and more difficult to detect and to destroy."

Nimrod Shefer

"[There are] very low-to very high-altitude missiles ... and targets that are becoming more and more difficult to detect and to destroy," he said.

REUTERS

BRIEF

Abortion providers sue Texas over new rules for fetal tissue disposal

Several abortion providers sued Texas in federal court on Monday to halt a new regulation that requires them to dispose of aborted fetal tissue either through burial or cremation, saying the rule is designed to limit abortions in the state.

The regulation, to take effect on Dec. 19, would also require hospitals and other medical facilities to bury or cremate miscarried fetuses. It is seen by women's health providers as part of a nationwide agenda to place new restrictions on abortions.

"The Regulation has no public health benefit. It does nothing to improve public health or safety ... rather, it is a pretext for restricting abortion access," according to a lawsuit filed by Whole Women's Health and others in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas.

The Health and Human Services Commission has said in a statement the state "developed new rules to ensure Texas law maintains the highest standards of human dignity."

Republicans opposed to abortion have proposed new restrictions on the procedure in several states after the U.S. Supreme Court in June struck down regulations in Texas.

The lawsuit claims the fetal tissue measure "imposes a funeral ritual" on women who have a miscarriage or an abortion, whether they want it or not. It would also require women who miscarried at places such as their homes to arrange for burials.

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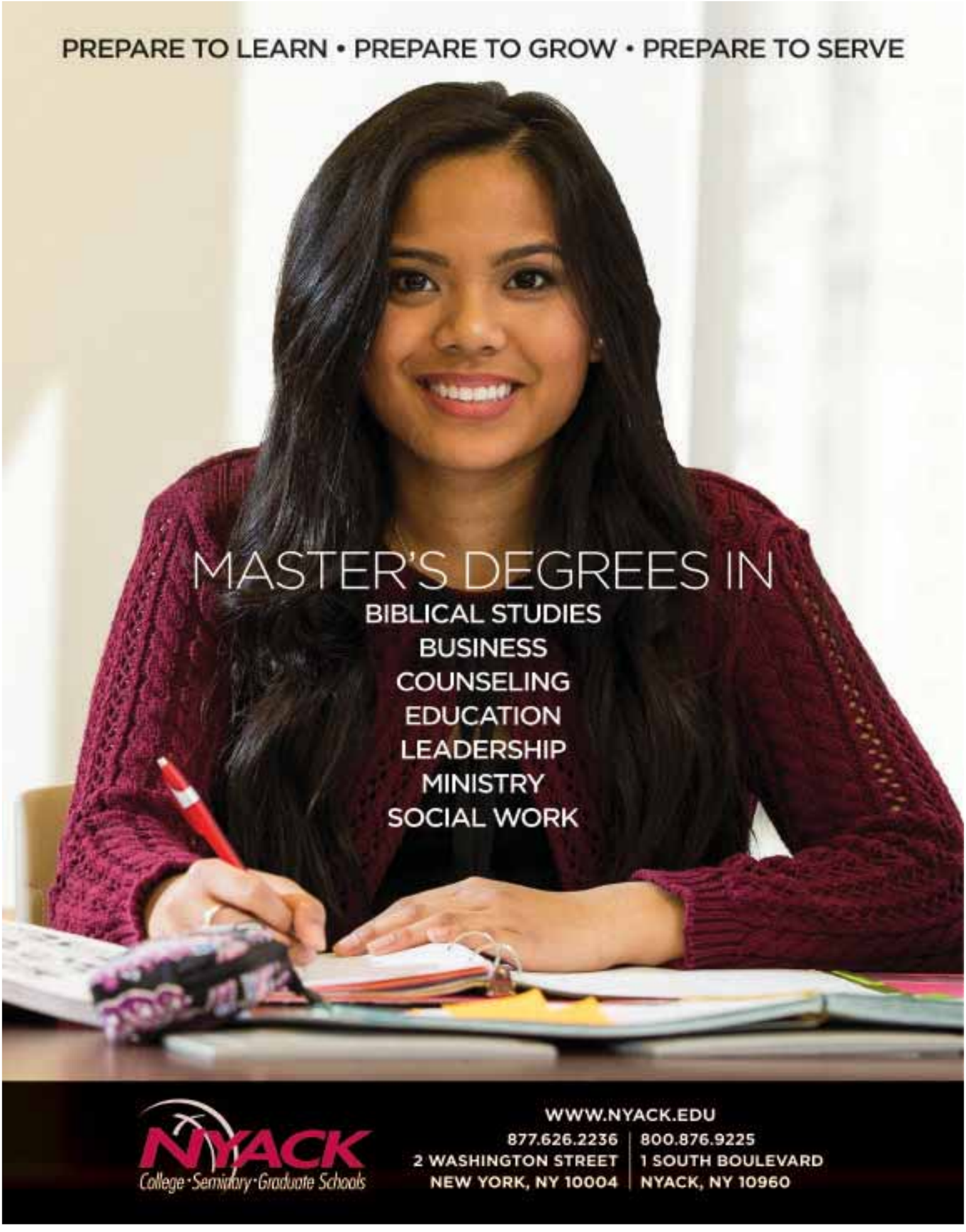
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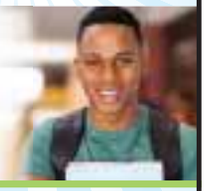

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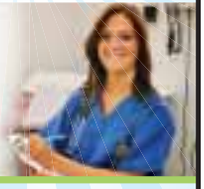

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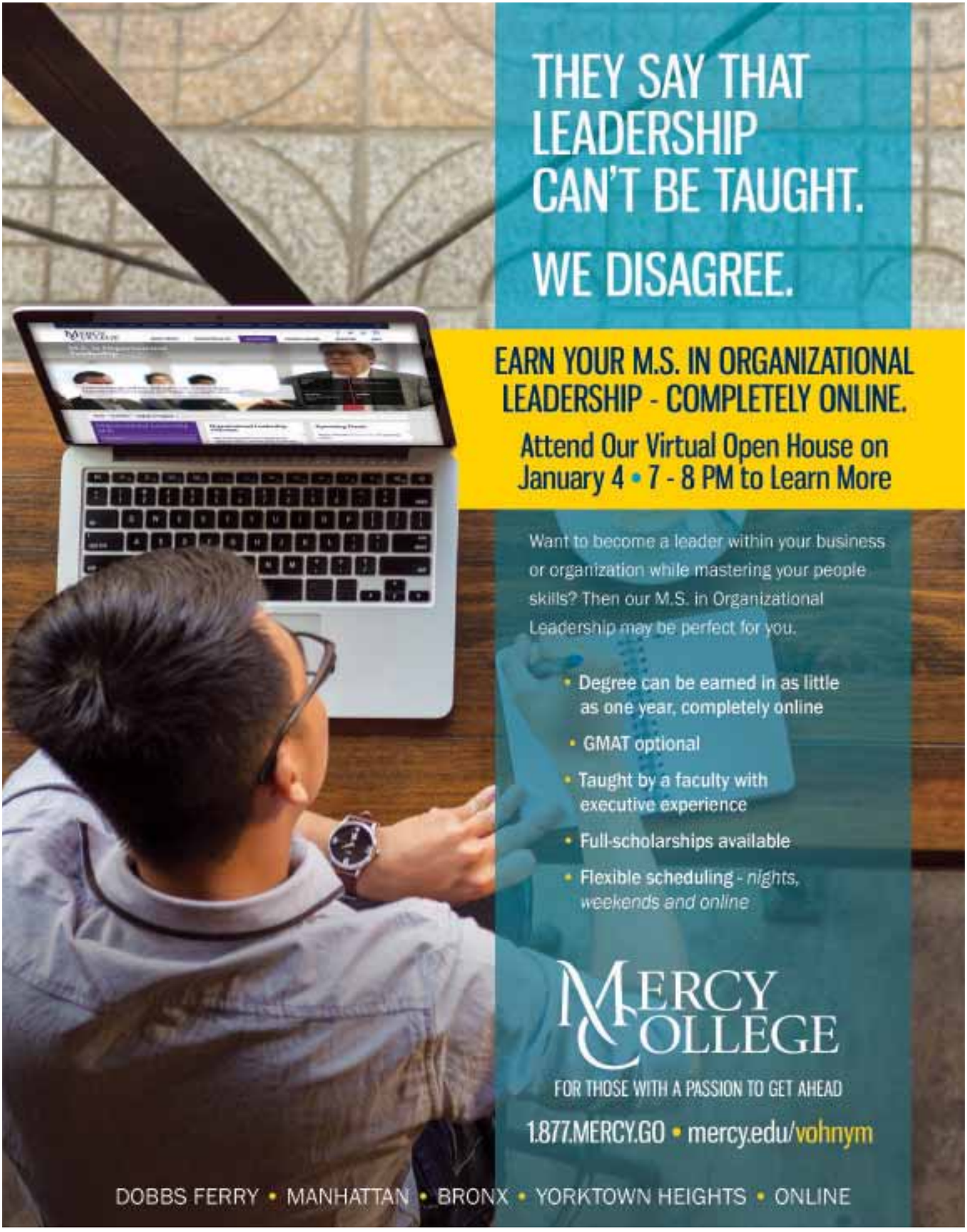
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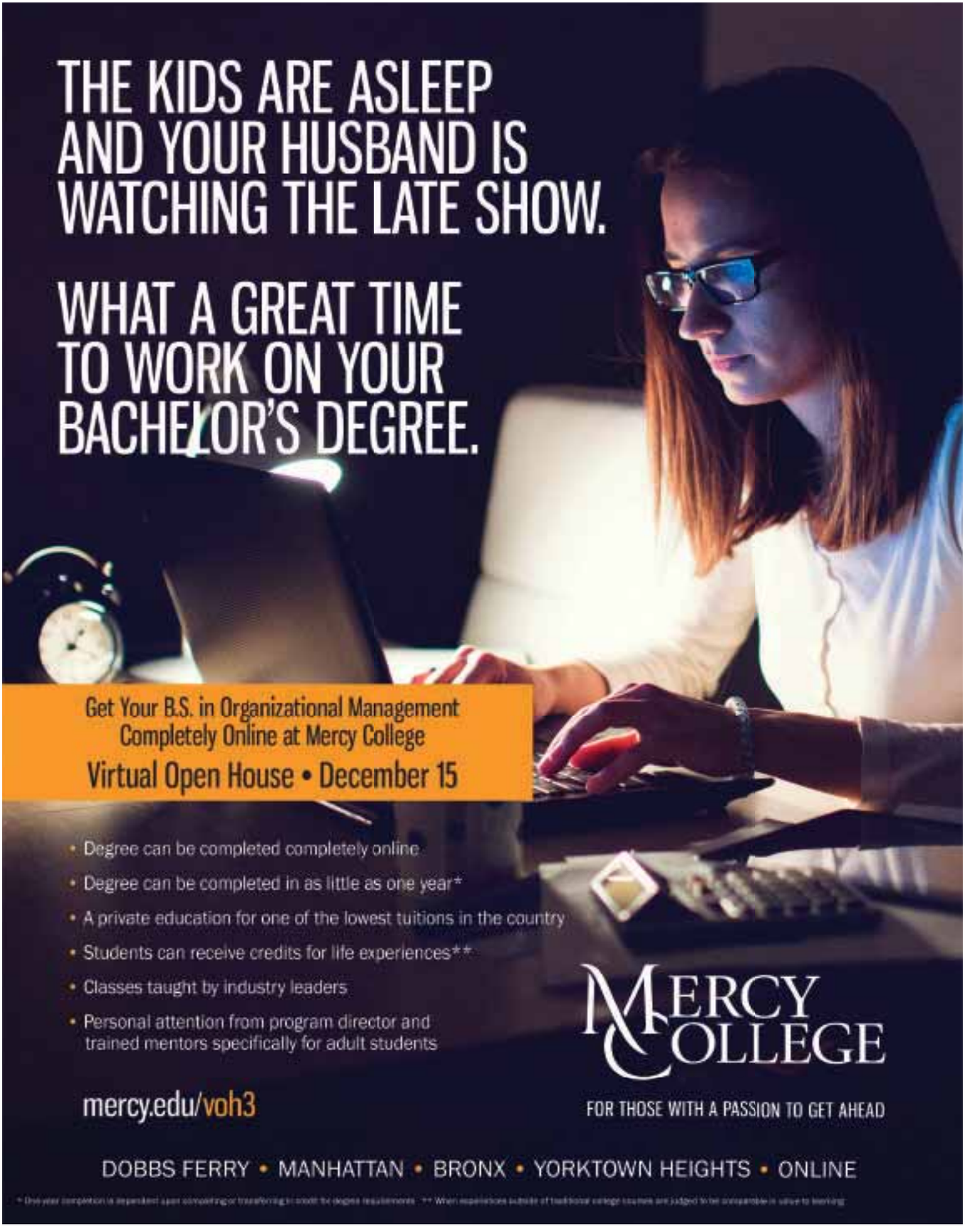
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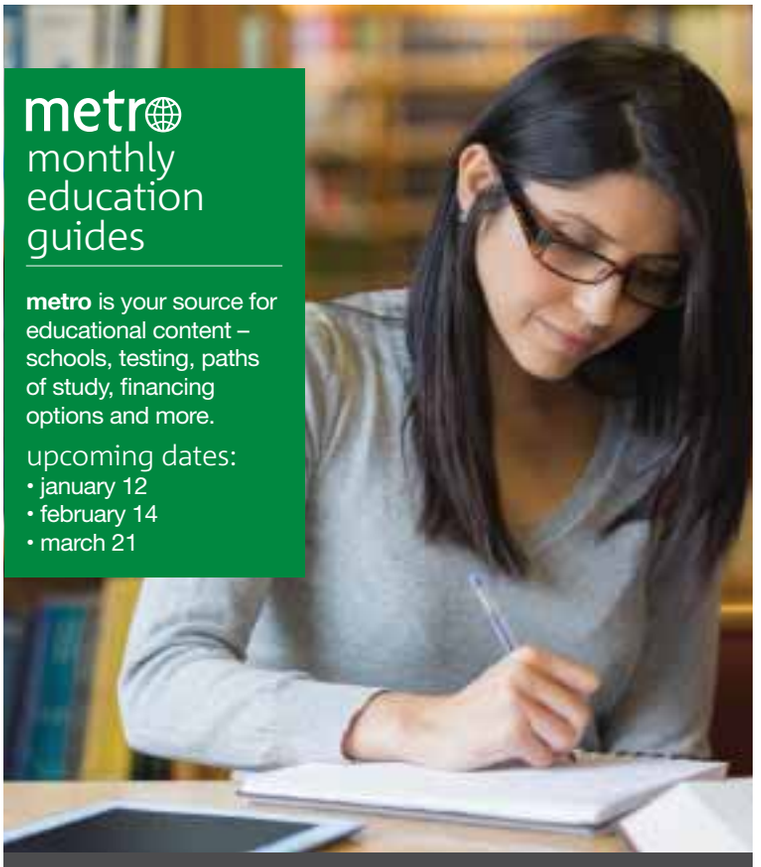

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SESALI BOWEN
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'Flip or Flop's' Tarek and Christina El Moussa are splitting up

Another one of HGTV's family-friendly couples is shattering the facade of peaceful perfection. Just a couple of months after some disturbing claims were made about the church that "Fixer Upper's" Chip and Joanna Gaines belong to, TMZ is reporting that Tarek and Christina El Moussa of "Flip or Flop" are separated.

In May, there was a domestic incident at the El Moussa's Orange County home that involved a "possibly suicidal male" with a gun. When authorities showed up, they found Tarek on a nearby hiking trail and made him surrender his weapon. Authorities confiscated five guns from their home.

The couple told TMZ that the May incident was an "unfortunate misunderstanding" and that they will continue to work through this [separation] process civilly and cooperatively, and plan to continue our professional life together." So maybe "Flip or Flop" will survive this?

But as fans of the show, we can say Tarek never listens to his wife, and that's such a deal-breaker in 2016.

Beyonce and Mariah take a selfie

Beyonce and Mariah Carey took a selfie together that was too fierce for the internet to handle.

What we know is that Beyonce attended Mimi's Christmas concert in New York on Sunday. But when two of the most iconic singers of our time take a selfie together, there has to be more to the story.

So here's how we envision how the meeting went down. *Cue dream sequence music*

Beyonce wanted to keep things low-key so she didn't actually tell Mariah she was coming. When Mariah arrived at her dressing room, via chaise lounge carried by shirtless men, and saw Beyonce there munching away at her capers, Mimi was annoyed, but still happy to have someone of her own caliber to chat with.

They shared tips on the best means of storing all their awards, swapped code names to use when checking into hotels, and toasted to Mariah still being divorced from Nick Cannon. They took a selfie to commemorate the occasion because they respect each other so much.

Mariah thanked Beyonce for dressing down on her special night. Beyonce wasn't even offended — she understood. Diva friends are the best.

INSTAGRAM.COM/MARIAHCAREY

Selena Gomez inks $10 million deal with Coach

Someone on her team has clearly still been taking calls and handling business since Selena Gomez took a break from the spotlight earlier this year. After being diagnosed with lupus and suffering anxiety and panic attacks, Gomez announced she would take some much-needed time off for self-care. But during that break she still managed to claim the top spot as the most-followed person on Instagram, with more than 104 million followers.

And now Page Six is reporting that the 24-year-old singer just inked a deal with Coach to design her own line and be featured in the company's ad campaigns. The former Disney star is set to receive $10 million for her part.

If these are the kinds of payouts Gomez is securing when she's not even trying, we would love to see her bank account during her busy seasons.

Khloe Kardashian and Lamar Odom officially divorce

The end of 2016 hasn't been grim for at least one member of the Kardashian family. We're talking about the fact that Lamar Odom has officially run out of time to stage another medical emergency that holds off his divorce from Khloe Kardashian.

Back in October, the couple reached a long-awaited settlement and signed off on the terms of their divorce. "Entertainment Tonight" has obtained documents, signed by a judge, that officially end their marriage.

Khloe initially filed for divorce in 2013. Last year, following Lamar's drug overdose, the reality star called off the divorce to support him in his recovery. But the couple still weren't able to make it work together and Khloe — who is ating Cleveland Cavaliers player Tristan Thompson — refiled for divorce in May.

As of December 17, Khloe and Lamar will be officially single. Finally.

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When two 'Mozart in the Jungle' stars were young

Malcolm McDowell and Bernadette Peters tell us about their very different ways of starting out.

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
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In the third season of "Mozart in the Jungle," now on Amazon, Malcolm McDowell and Bernadette Peters resume their roles as a former conductor and the director of his old New York symphony. JESSICA MIGLIO

Amazingly, Malcolm McDowell and Bernadette Peters never worked together before "Mozart in the Jungle," whose third season just hit Amazon. It makes sense: One is a British bad boy, still best known for "A Clockwork Orange." The other is a Broadway god and Stephen Sondheim muse.

So do these two thespians — who have considerable chemistry on "Mozart," as a grouchy former conductor and president of his longtime symphony — have any past in common? As it happens, yes: Musicals! McDowell did a few in school. Unlike Peters, he abandoned it. Well before his film debut, in 1969's "If…", McDowell cut his teeth on the theater, doing one play a week.

"I didn't know how to act! I had no idea," McDowell tells us. "The poor people who came to see these plays basically paid for my drama school."

The grind burned him out. Luckily he wound up at the Royal Shakespeare Company — but that, too, he felt was a drag.

"As soon as I got into the Royal Shakespeare Company, I realized what it was, which was basically drunken gambling and whoring," he remembers. "I decided I better get out of this. I was always trying to get out of things." He met with the company's head, the illustrious Peter Hall, and told him he was leaving. "[Hall] said, 'What are you going to do?' I said, 'I'm going into film!' And he said, 'Good luck.'"

The rest is history. Indeed, McDowell presently has over 200 film credits on his résumé.

Bernadette Peters, meanwhile, only has just over 20. She's been busier on stage and in television. A quarter of those film titles hail from the '70s, when she acted with Burt Reynolds twice ("The Longest Yard" and "Silent Movie"), and did oddball b-movies, like "Vigilante Force," starring Kris Kristofferson and Jan-Michael Vincent. By the '80s she was doing classier work, like "Annie" and "Pennies from Heaven." Why the unusual early period, then?

GETTY IMAGES

"Because I said yes to every film!" Peters tells us. "I thought those films were so strange. I finally said, 'I need to stop doing these fakakta films.' Then I did 'Pennies from Heaven.' That was not fakakta. I realized from then on out that I wanted to do movies that were actually written well, or where the role was incredible. I didn't want to do it just to do it."

As to "Mozart in the Jungle," its new episodes play very differently now. The show has always dealt with the difficulties a classical art faces in our age. Now, with the new administration coming in, it seems the arts will be in even deeper peril.

"You ain't seen nothin' yet," McDowell says. "Just keep your passport in order."

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‘Saved by the Bell’ creator: Trump got elected because he’s more entertaining

The 80-year-old producer recently released his memoir, “I Was Saved by the Bell.”

JENNIFER LOGUE
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Peter Engel

For ’90s kids, “Saved by the Bell” was everything. The iconic teen sitcom followed relatable and lovable characters like Zack Morris and Jessie Spano as they dealt with the trials and tribulations of being a teen at Bayside High.

Show creator Peter Engel recalls being there through it all in his new memoir, “I Was Saved by the Bell.” We asked the 80-year-old television producer about the book, putting cell phones on television and his thoughts on a reality TV star being president.

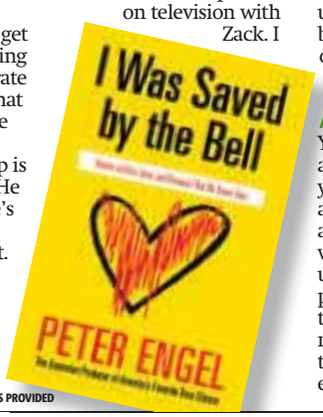
You’ve been in show business since college. Is there anything you know now that you wish you knew then?

No, because I was too naive back then. If I knew then what I know now, I probably would never have continued the journey. I know too much now. I never thought for a second I would fail, and fail I did many times. Got my heart broken a million times, but it’s coming back that’s important.

So Donald Trump, a reality TV star, is going to be our president. Any thoughts on that?

My thought is that we get what we are. This is going to be a business corporate utopia for some. Can that work? I’m not sure. The campaign was almost like a circus, but Trump is brilliant at the media. He knows exactly what he’s doing — the tweets in the middle of the night.

I can only hope for the best. I say give him a chance as opposed to those who want to get rid of him the first day he’s inaugurated. I’m not thrilled about it, but this is America and somehow we always come back. To some people this is a tremendous high. To me it’s a tremendous C-minus of who we are and what we understand. I also think the internet and the cell phone are to blame. [Pause] You know, I had the first cell phone on television with Zack. I should have gotten royalties, I’d be very rich.



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Really?

Nobody ever had cell phones on television back then. Some doctor shows had beepers, right? But no one till Zack had a cell phone. On the other side of the coin, I think a cell phone and the internet has been the worst thing upon our social structure because we have lots of information, but no knowledge.

Ain’t that the truth.

You can find anyone who agrees with you. I mean you can go to the internet and you’ll find eventually someone who agrees with you, and Trump understands that. He tells people what they want to hear and now that he’s the president-elect, he’s had enough of them. It’s going to be a very interesting ride.

It’s the culture that’s been created.

Yes, and I think that the presidential election is a two-year reality show. At the end of the day — and I’m a Democrat — who would you rather watch for the next four years on television? And quite frankly, even as someone who’s not happy about what happened, I’d rather watch him than Hillary. It’s called show business.

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Why Knee And Hip Arthritis Pain Sufferers Are Flocking To This Manhattan Medical Clinic To Relieve Pain And Avoid Joint Replacement Surgery

Knee Arthritis Pain Breakthrough?

Real Doctor's Advice On The Most Advanced Medical Treatments For Knee Arthritis Pain

"The Knee Arthritis Treatment Everyone Is Talking About..."

By Matt Edgar
America's Heath Writer

NYC - Modern medicine has come a long way.

The success stories and lives saved are endless.

And now, through advanced technology and science - skilled medical doctors are helping more knee and hip arthritis pain sufferers than ever before.

In just a moment, I'm going to reveal some of these incredible arthritis pain techniques...

So you can possibly relive some or all of your pain...

Just like thousands of others already have.

I bet many of these former arthritis pain sufferers were just like *you.*

But first, I have to tell you about this - it's very important information so you can make the very best decision about relieving your arthritis pain.

It will also help you avoid costly and painful mistakes.

Ready for some great arthritis pain relief information? Ok, here we go...

The Two Arthritis Treatment Paths...

The first thing to understand, is that there are basically two treatment paths you can choose to go down when you are looking for relief to knee or hip arthritis pain.

One path is non-surgical. You do not want surgery (who does!) so you do everything you can to avoid it.

You take pain pills, do physical therapy and exercises and maybe you even changed you diet.

Nothing worked. The pain progressively got worse until you couldn't stand it anymore.

Because you did not get the proper treatment - your joints decayed past the point of no return. Now they are basically "bone on bone" and the doctor told you there is no other option. You need...

The Dreaded...

joint replacement surgery.

I will admit - some people do need joint replacement surgery.

This procedure has come a very long way in recent years.

For some, at a certain point, this is the way to go.

But - and this is a very big but... even though this procedure has improved dramatically... it is not without risk.

In fact, a $500 million verdict in a lawsuit was just awarded to patients who received faulty hip implants during hip replacement surgery.

Some of the damage being reported from the faulty hip replacements sounds horrific.

There is no doubt, joint replacement surgery should be your last resort.

But too many people think they need joint replacement surgery when you do not.

In fact, many respond extremely well to a medical treatment approach that is finally becoming much more popular.

This is...

Treatment Path #2

This treatment path is non-surgical but it probably NOT what you are thinking.

It is NOT pain pills and grueling exercises. We think it is...

Much better

It is a treatment that actually puts vital lubricating gel directly into your arthritic knee or hip joint.

This is extremely important because when you have arthritis, you lose lubricating fluid in your joints.

In other words, your joints basically "dry up."

This causes joint surfaces to rub together causing all kinds of problems including brutal PAIN.

As time goes on - the joint wears out more and more and the pain can be excruciating.

The medical procedure I am speaking about is called...

viscosupplementation. During this procedure a FDA approved gel-like medicine is placed directly into the joint space.

This allows the joint to glide freely and move much better again.

This decreases the abnormal rubbing and wear and tear and, in many cases, decreases or even eliminates pain.

Sounds Great Right?

It does But... viscosupplementation has not worked for many people.

There are two very important reasons why:

If you have knee or hip arthritis pain and want to relieve your pain without surgery - or if you have already tried viscosupplementation without good results - what you are about to discover will be extremely important...

The first reason some people did not get good results with viscosupplementation is... bluntly... this is a real medical procedure done by real medical doctors.

This is NOT a "wonder cure" sold by slick marketers.

In the real world of medicine and science, no treatments work 100% of the time or on everyone. And no good and ethical doctor would make such a claim or guarantee any results what-so-ever.

So, there are some people that will not get results with this treatment.

Reason #2

To assure the best possible results, this treatment requires expensive advanced technology and a skilled medical doctor with experience doing this procedure.

For this treatment to have the best chance to work, the lubricating gel must be placed precisely into the joint space. Thats why **"Precision Arthritis Targeting Technology"** or PATT is always used. PATT uses a special medical camera and fluorosocpic imaging to guide the procedure and make sure the gel-like medicine gets exactly where you need it.

Many doctors doing this procedure do not use this advanced digital imaging and do these procedure either under ultrasound or "blind."

No Difference?

They say there is no difference - but research shows that doctors doing joint injections without being guided by the proper imaging ***completely miss the joint space about one third of the time.***

And because treatments are so precise - most patients report they are also painless.

Now that you know the facts - would you choose a doctor who uses advanced digital imaging to guide the treatment - or one who injects you blind?

Can you see why this treatment has not worked for so many? And can you see why, with the Precision Arthritis Targeting Technology and a doctor who has already done thousands of these procedures ***- it could work for you?***

That's why so many knee and hip arthritis sufferers are flocking to a medical clinic in NYC called "NY Pain Relief MD" that focusses on helping patients relieve their knee and hip arthritis pain and get back to doing all the things they want to do - like playing golf, walking without pain, tennis and many others.

But one of the biggest successes is when patients who were told they needed joint replacement surgery cancel the surgery because they feel so much better.

They get such great results because they use advanced digital imaging (PATT) to guide their treatments, their doctors are specially trained and have performed THOUSANDS of treatments and they use multiple brands of lubricating gels (many doctors only use one they have a "relationship" with).

But that's not all - for difficult cases, they also add advanced PRP and Stem cell treatments with often wonderful results.

Every patient is unique and they have a very unique treatment plan for every single patient so you can get the best possible results in the shortest amount of time.

Here's How To Find Out If We Can Help You

If you have knee or hip arthritis pain and would like to find out if the treatments at NY Pain MD can help you - you can come in for a risk-free no-obligation screening.. During this screening you will get a chance to ask questions and find out if you are a candidate for these advanced medical treatments - and what your best options are. The screening is completely free with no further obligation.

After your screening, you will breath a big sigh or relief knowing what your options are and the best way to deal with your pain.

If you are not sure - I know exactly how you feel. Arthritis pain is brutal. And it is hard to get straight answers.

So many patients felt the same way.

They told us they had given up until they read some information just like this and they came in to see us.

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Give us a call right now at 855-456-PAIN and schedule your free screening.

The worst thing that can happened is you find out this treatment is not for you.

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What if we really can get rid of some of all your pain?

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65 Broadway Suite 1004
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855-456-PAIN
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Why Is This Treatment In Such High Demand?

"Precision Arthritis Targeting" Technology

There are many big medical clinics in NYC. In fact, New York offers some of the best medical care in the world.

With so many great options - **why are knee arthritis sufferers flocking to NY Pain Relief MD?**

There are several reasons. The first is what we can "Precision Targeted Knee Pain Technology."

Here's what that means and why it is so important to you.

This treatment places a medical lubricating and cushioning gel directly into the arthritic knee joint. This helps the knee glide more smoothly decreasing or eliminating pain.

Precision Arthritis Targeted Technology Or PATT means that we use extremely advanced digital imaging to make sure this lubricating gel is placed precisely where it is supposed to go. This means treatments have the best chance for success.

Doing this procedure without this advanced technology often leads to misplaced lubricating gel and failure.

Another secret to success is using multiple treatments to maximize pain relief and healing. NY Pain MD uses multiple brands of lubricating gels and also offers stem cell therapy and platelet rich plasma (PRP). PRP is being used by top professional athletes in an attempt to heal injuries faster. The combination of these treatments can often get incredible results when other treatments have failed.

While many clinics only offer one of these treatments - NY Pain Relief Md offers them all under one roof for maximum results and convenience.

And just as important is the experience of NY Pain MD Relief doctors. NY Pain Relief MD doctors are experts at this procedure and have successfully done thousands.

A cappella on Broadway

Everything you need to know about "In Transit," the first big-time musical without instruments.

T. MICHELLE MURPHY
@MetroNewYork
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"In Transit" is the first-ever musical without an orchestra to be staged on the Great White Way. JOAN MARCUS

When the revival of "Sunset Boulevard" opens on Broadway next year, it will boast the biggest ever orchestra for a show. But before that, a musical that uses no instruments at all is hitting the stage.

"In Transit" is the first fully a cappella musical — that's right, nothing but the actors' voices — to make it to one of the sacred houses of Midtown. Curious about just how a concept like this will work? We asked Kristen Anderson-Lopez, the creator of "In Transit," to tell us everything we need to know about this new kind of musical ahead of its Dec. 11 opening at Circle in the Square Theatre.

1 It's got a top-notch creative team

Who better to take this leap than one of the lyricists behind "Let It Go," one of the catchiest musical numbers of this century? That would also be Anderson-Lopez (she's also currently adapting "Frozen" for Broadway 2018), who was among the show's lyricists — along with some friends she met in (where else?) her a cappella group.

"In my 20s, I found my best friends and co-writers Sara [Wordsworth], Russ [Kaplan] and James-Allen [Ford] through an a cappella group," she says. "That's where what I like to call 'theatricappella' was born." Also on the team is Deke Sharon, the vocal producer from "Pitch Perfect," another fitting pick. They're directed and choreographed with "wit and creative whimsy" by two-time Tony Award winner Kathleen Marshall.

2 It takes place on the subway

As the name suggests, "In Transit" is a show about going places. Eleven characters (led by "American Idol" Justin Guarini and Telly Leung, returning to the stage where he starred in "Godspell") step onto the subway and find their lives intersecting and changing in unanticipated ways, an anthem to the anything-can-happen nature of NYC. In another feat of staging ingenuity a la the turntable of "Hamilton," a treadmill runs through the center, helping bring to life the illusion of moving down the tracks — whether it's in your commute or in life. Anderson-Lopez sums up the message of the show as: "the people and connections on the journey are just as important as the destination itself."

3 It's staged "in the round"

Those lucky enough to catch "Fun Home" will be familiar with the unique layout of Circle in the Square. It's a challenging venue to conquer, but for an a cappella show, those challenges quadruple. Singers rely on their proximity to one another to find their pitch. Helping 11 singers harmonize across a room was a challenge not only for Marshall, but also for the sound designers tasked with making sure each audience member receives the optimum experience. "Ken Travis, our sound guy, had to invent technology to pull this off," Anderson-Lopez says.

If you go

"In Transit"
Through June 25
Circle in the Square Theatre
235 W. 50th St.
$99-$159
intransitbroadway.com

Also referencing "The Encounter," the immersive play that has viewers wear headphones, she adds, "This year makes a great case for reinstating the Tony Award for sound design. Ken's team deserves all the awards, plus a trip to Disney World!"

4 It works as your family's holiday show

If you have to satisfy a picky audience at home, "In Transit" might be your saving grace. "I've had baby boomers tell me this show is the best thing they've seen in a long time. Twentysomethings say, 'Have I been spying on them?' And I've had an entire row of 12-year-olds tell me they liked it as much as 'Hamilton' — which is really the best you could ask," says Anderson-Lopez. Plus, it's got that holiday spirit: "It's joyful and heartfelt. It's about laughing at life's obstacles and tuning into the harmony all around you to find your way."

A cappella fans might also be interested in checking out "Pitch Perfect" star Ben Platt in "Dear Evan Hansen," a new musical about a high school's response to tragedy that's both timely and surprisingly uplifting. It opened at the Music Box Theatre on Dec. 4.

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wellbeing

ISTOCK

How to conquer the Sunday Scaries

Unfortunately, it involves getting s— done.

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You know the feeling. It's 3 p.m. on a Sunday, and the dread sets in. Popularly known as the "Sunday Scaries," the phenomenon of end-of-the-weekend anxiety also goes by the Sunday Sads or the Sunday Blues.

Will deFries, a 29-year-old writer for millennial humor site Post-Grad Problems, says he suffers from the Scaries "without fail, every single Sunday. It's an inevitable thing, like your alarm going off: it's Sunday, here they are!"

In 2012, on a lark and in need of a creative outlet outside work, he created a website and a brand called the Sunday Scaries, designing comfy, long-sleeved T-shirts that say "Sunday Scaries" and "Ride the Wave."

His philosophy serviced an online community for the anxious. "If we're all scared collectively, we're less scared individually," DeFries says, quoting a former Sunday Scaries contributor.

And there is no shortage of Scaries victims in need of some kind of community. On Twitter, where deFries operates the handle @SundayScaries, he serves as a sort of de facto therapist, receiving countless DMs and tweets from sufferers every seventh day of the week.

Does creating a sort-of meme out of the Scaries help lessen their impact, we wondered? Not exactly. "Now [the Scaries] are always on my mind, it's impossible not to get them," he says. But there is a silver lining: "The more I get them, the more self-aware of them I am, and the more tolerable they become."

Meanwhile, Man Repeller also attempts to create a community for the Sunday scared. The fashion and lifestyle publication has a column called the Sunday Scaries Diary detailing stress eating, procrastination, writer's block and more Sunday plagues.

Again, the idea seems to be that by sharing your Sunday Scaries, you can normalize them, making them … less scary?

But it might take more than that. A recent column written by Man Repeller founder Leandra Medine gets real: "The thing about Sunday Scaries is that the only way to make them go away is to do a bunch of s— you really don't want to do."

According to Dr. Megan Clary, a clinical psychologist in NYC, the trick is to carve out a window of time over the weekend to be productive, then reward yourself by meeting up with a friend. You can even set up a ritual. "I think that's what HBO does [for people]," she jokes.

> *"The more I get [the Sunday Scaries] … the more tolerable the become."*
>
> Will deFries, @SundayScaries founder

To fight inevitable procrastination, she says you have to make at least some aspect of the task appealing. Grading papers is a drag, but maybe if you do the work at your favorite coffee house, it will be a little less painful than hunkering down in your cluttered living room.

Life coach Kara Loewentheil agrees that avoiding your to-do list only makes the weekend anxiety worse.

"The problem with not planning is that you always feel like you should be doing something" and that feeling can seep into your leisure time.

The fact that work emails start filling up your inbox on Sunday evening does not help, she adds.

Yet a case of the Sunday Scaries doesn't necessarily indicate job dissatisfaction. "If everyone who hated Sunday nights had chosen the wrong career, we'd have a lot of people in the wrong career," she points out. Often, it's the way you're thinking about your job, rather than your job itself, that causes stress and anxiety.

Using cognitive techniques, Loewentheil attempts to change the often overly negative way people think. First, she helps her clients identify the trigger for the negative thought, and then encourages them to practice thinking more positive thoughts—within reason. You can't go from "I hate this job, it makes me miserable," to "I love my job," but you could practice thinking something like, "I don't always love my job, but so far, I've survived it."

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Knicks starting to look like legit contender in Eastern Conference

The Knicks play at Phoenix tonight.

TONY WILLIAMS
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The Knicks are still undoubtedly Carmelo Anthony's team, but thanks to a replenished roster, he's no longer the whole team.

A couple of road wins lately have confirmed that Anthony is no longer needed to carry the load for an undermanned Knicks squad. Team president Phil Jackson has done what many thought was impossible — make New York a complete roster and relevant again. And by doing so, Anthony isn't needed to be perfect or go out guns blazing just to give the Knicks a chance at victory.

Whether it's the more well-known veterans like Kristaps Porzingis, Derrick Rose, Courtney Lee, or Brandon Jennings or unsung characters like Mindaugas Kuzminskas, Kyle O'Quinn, or Willie Hernangomez, the Knicks (14-10) are beginning to look like an actual Eastern Conference contender, in large part due to a roster that's starting to gel and no longer becoming superstar dependent.

Sunday's win over the pesky Los Angeles Lakers (10-16) was a good sign for a Knicks squad that featured a struggling Anthony, who shot 4-of-12, but still won, 118-112. That's an occurrence that probably wouldn't have happened last year or the previous two campaigns when the Knicks missed the playoffs.

He also scored 33 points against the Sacramento Kings two nights earlier, but shot 41 percent on 22 attempts to do so. The Knicks still hung on to win that game, because the supporting cast picked up their star.

Porzingis chipped in with a double-double of 17 points and 10 rebounds, Jennings added 13 points in place of Rose (back), and even O'Quinn, who has been an admirable fill-in for the banged-up Joakim Noah, registered 11 rebounds and tough defense on All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins, who shot 9-of-25 from the field.

It's been a different guy each night for the Knicks, and that bodes well for their long-term fortunes.

"All this does is build confidence and trust," Jennings recently said, noting how well the team comes together in the clutch.

New York is 6-0 in games decided by four points or fewer, which shows guys aren't afraid of the moment. They're winning close games late and having a new face regularly step up, much like the Lakers game where the Knicks staved off a furious comeback attempt behind Porzingis' defense, Jennings' ability to break down the defense, Lee's timely 3s, and Rose's clutch shots.

Kristaps Porzingis rejects the Lakers' D'Angelo Russell Sunday night. GETTY IMAGES

Rose, who missed the two previous games with a back issue, gave the Lakers fits late with easy runners in the lane and a mid-range jump shot that was pristine, en route to 25 points. He noted that while the team is "improving every day," even they still "don't know how good we can become." The Cleveland Cavaliers (17-5) and Toronto Raptors (16-7) are still the cream of the crop in the conference, but the rest of the franchises battling for the remaining six playoff spots need to take these Knicks seriously — and that feels like it's been a long time coming for the Garden faithful.

Knicks notes

The Knicks are 2-0 on their current five-game road trip, with the Phoenix Suns up next, Tuesday night. Phoenix was the previous stop for current Knicks head coach Jeff Hornacek.

The Knicks are a season-best four games over .500.

Porzingis became the first player since 1983 to have 25 points, 10 rebounds, (career-high tying) seven blocks, and at least three 3s in a single game when he did so against the Lakers.

Porzingis, who made a pledge to donate $500 to a Harlem youth club for every blocked shot, was more than happy to cut a check for $3,500: "I was telling teammates not to foul them and I'm going to go for the block. I was able to do that — and donate some money as well."

Jennings, a Compton, California, native, earned his first career win at Staples Center.

It wasn't a total waste of a game for Anthony in Los Angeles, as he added eight rebounds, three steals, and a season-high seven assists.

Both Giants and Cowboys have rugged schedules the rest of the way

Odell Beckham Jr. and the Giants have a tough road ahead of them. GETTY IMAGES

Just imagine if the Steelers hadn't deflated their own footballs and the Giants beat Pittsburgh nine days ago. Had Big Blue taken care of business that day, they'd be 10-3 today and just a game behind the Cowboys (11-2) for first place in the NFC East with three games to go.

The Giants still have a path to a division title, despite their current standing, but it's highly unlikely the Cowboys will be worse than 2-1 in their final three dates. Dallas hosts Tampa Bay this coming Sunday night, then faces Detroit at home the day after Christmas. Then the Cowboys are at Philly in their season finale. None of those games are gimmes. The Buccaneers are the hottest team in football, winners of five straight. Detroit is 9-4 and leading the NFC North. And the Eagles would never roll over at home against the hated Cowboys despite the fact that they're already out of the playoff race.

The Giants also have a difficult road the rest of the way. They'll host the aforementioned Lions this coming Sunday, then they play at Philly four days later. Big Blue wraps up its season at Washington and as of now the 7-5-1 Redskins are still very much in the hunt for a wild card spot.

MATT BURKE

Raanta has been sharp while subbing for Lundqvist in net

Raanta shut out the Devils Sunday night.

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The ultimate truism in professional sports is that it is not a meritocracy.

It is a lesson that the New York Rangers are currently learning.

"I love Hank but I love the team more," Alain Vigneault said when asked about his rationale to start Antti Raanta in goal over Henrik Lundqvist for the third straight game. "[Antti] is definitely playing well and deserves to play. Hank, like all our players [has] a team-first attitude. Right now there is no doubt that Antti is playing real well and deserves to play."

Indeed, Raanta did play well in the Rangers' 2-1 and 1-0 wins over the Jets and Blackhawks, respectively. He stopped 40 of 41 shots in the two games, including making five stops on five power plays against and one short-handed save. For the season, Raanta is 7-1-0 with a .939 save percentage and 1.83 goals against in 10 games, having started nine.

The Rangers haven't skipped a beat with Antti Raanta in net. GETTY IMAGES

"It doesn't matter who plays [in goal]. We play the same way," Mats Zuccarello told the New York Post in Chicago Friday. "We all know what [Lundqvist] brings the team, but [Raanta] is playing well."

Still, there is a fundamental question that is being asked by reporters and a vocal percentage of fans on social media website. That is, how can sitting Lundqvist be justified?

Lundqvist has been the foundation of this, the Rangers' Golden Era, almost since the NHL reopened its doors following the 2004-05 lockout. The numbers speak for themselves.

Entering the 2016-17 season, Lundqvist was 374-229-72-59 with a 2.28 GAA and .921 save percentage, along with 59 shutouts. Essentially, if he was not the pre-eminent goalie of his generation — an argument can be made for Montreal's Carey Price — Lundqvist was no lower than fifth in the list of top-five netminders.

That has not been the case this season, despite the Rangers' 19-9-1 mark through 29 games. Lundqvist has compiled a 12-8-0-1 mark with a .912 save percentage, 2.55 goals against and one shutout. Even more a concern is Lundqvist's .902 save percentage and 3.05 GAA in his last eight games.

"In the past, I had opportunities to play [through] ups and downs," Lundqvist said after Sunday's morning skate, according to The Post. "I just play and get into a nice flow. It's a little different now. You play a couple and you sit out, so it's a different approach.

"I like to play. A lot of times that's how I get into a nice rhythm. It's hard to argue when Antti is playing that well. I understand. It's about what's best for the team right now. It's not about me. I just need to keep my focus on what I can control right now, and that's my own game."

So, for now, Lundqvist won't take his accustomed crease. Rather, he will work with goaltending coach Benoit Allaire on the technical aspects of his trade until Vigneault calls on him.

And with nine games left this month, the odds are great that Lundqvist will play before the calendar year comes to an end.

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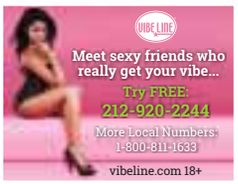

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Solves Problem Like Depression, Love, Job, Money, Business, Jealousy, Husband & Wife, Blockage, Etc

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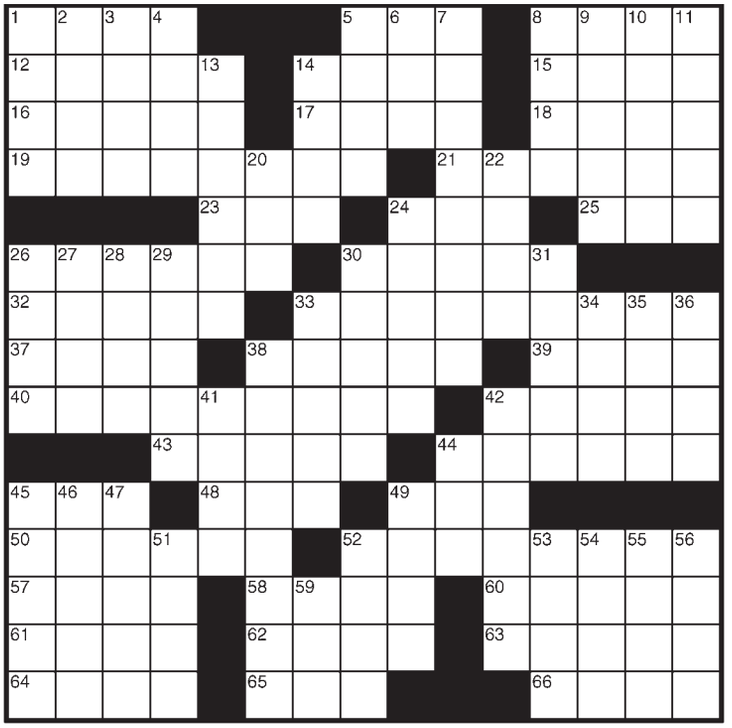
Across
1 Pronto on "ER"
5 VH1 rival
8 Blow hard?
12 -- up (hiding)
14 Breezy greeting
15 Distant past
16 Eager, plus
17 Down Under rockers
18 Genesis garden
19 Yucatan's -- Roo
21 Somewhere else
23 Mi. above sea level
24 Heat meas.
25 NATO cousin
26 Rock's -- Brothers
30 Slinkies
32 Burns' partner
33 Type of squash
37 Approach
38 Lament
39 Persia, today
40 They coo a lot
42 Light incense to
43 Pool problem
44 Teeter-totter
45 Raw metal
48 Website
49 Badger
50 Pilot fish
52 Breadth
57 Ambush
58 Eggnog time
60 Ventricle neighbor
61 Bristle
62 Zoomed
63 Trekkie idol
64 Nothing but
65 That girl
66 Seance sounds

Down
1 Hoops nickname
2 Soybean food
3 Et --
4 Coastal flier
5 Translucent mineral
6 Skosh
7 Trade
8 Tournament passes
9 Calgary Stampede
10 Ice-show venue
11 Well-bred chaps
13 Hold up
14 Hypocrisy
20 Malt brew
22 Lion's share
24 Oafs
26 Boone, informally
27 Low-fat spread
28 Patron saint of Norway
29 Cleveland exurb
30 Makeshift
31 Catty
33 Reef material
34 Psyche's beloved
35 Irene of "Fame"
36 Was in on
38 Farm workers, often
41 Get fuzzy
42 Sea off Greece
44 In the doldrums
45 Lawn products brand
46 Put on the late show
47 PC message
49 Nefertiti's river
51 Grand Ole --
52 As it --
53 Roulette color
54 "Cope Book" aunt
55 Avast!
56 Puts into words
59 Cry of delight



metro.us/sudoku

easy

	3			8		9		5
8			2		3			
4	2			5				
9		1			7	4		
			6		4			
		8	1			2		6
				4			6	2
			3		2			1
2		9		6			8	

hard

	8	9				3	7	
			5		9	1		
	4				1	9		
	1		9		7		3	2
9	6		3		4		1	
		1	4				6	
		3	6		2			
	9	6				5	8	

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries You need to put more energy into important relationships. The more enthusiasm and willingness to compromise you show, the more you will get in return.

Taurus Think matters through, but don't stop the flow of something that appears to be moving forward smoothly. Tying up financial matters will help you move ahead.

Gemini It's a good day to book travel plans. Take care of your responsibilities to ensure you have time to spend with friends and family as the year comes to a close.

Cancer You need to take care of pending financial or medical issues that you may have let slip. A clean slate before the year's end will boost your morale.

Leo You must put partnerships first. It's in your best interest to set the stage for a secure and prosperous upcoming year. Don't leave anything to the last moment.

Virgo A work opportunity looks promising, but may interfere with your relationships. Don't disrupt your home life until you have concrete evidence that change is coming.

Libra Take care of concerns that children or elders in your life have voiced. Your help will revive the love you have for each other and bring you satisfaction.

Scorpio Overspending will be a problem. Check over your investments, bank accounts and overall spending habits, and adjust your strategy in order to deal with debt.

Sagittarius Put more emphasis on your personal accomplishments and what you still want to achieve. A physical change will turn out favorable and boost your confidence.

Capricorn Expand your knowledge, not your responsibilities. Gather information and weigh the prospects carefully. Stick to moderate projects that factor in peace of mind.

Aquarius Carrying out home improvements, updating your investments and making special plans with children, relatives or loved ones look promising. Favors will be granted.

Pisces Don't divulge secret information. Make travel plans or arrangements with friends or relatives you want to touch base with before the end of the year. EUGENIA LAST

Yesterday's answers

A	V	A	I	L		S	U	E	D		S	P	I	T
L	O	R	N	E		A	T	E	E		L	A	M	A
P	L	A	N	T		H	I	K	E		O	R	A	L
S	E	T	S	S	A	I	L			S	W	A	N	K
				L	L	B		B	R	A	U	N		
A	S	S	A	I	L		C	R	A	M	P	O	N	
U	N	H	I	P		B	O	O	N	E		R	E	A
R	O	I	L		C	L	O	A	K		E	M	I	L
A	R	M		M	O	O	E	D		A	T	A	L	E
	E	M	P	E	R	O	R		O	R	E	L	S	E
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K	A	R	E	N			F	O	R	E	B	E	A	R
E	L	I	A		V	I	O	L		N	U	R	S	E
L	A	N	D		W	I	N	K		I	S	L	E	S
P	I	G	S		S	I	T	S		C	H	E	A	T

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